



Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
June 3rd, 2019 | 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

Present: Casey Drew, Dave Drown, Emily Ellingson (via phone), Darryl High, Dawn Jaffray (via phone), Chris Lindell, Linda Mattes (via phone), Andrew Morf, Jeff Pomeranz, Randy Rings, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Matthew Miller, David Sorg

Guests: Jon Rouse – Park CR

Staff: Ellen Bardsley, Jenn Draper, Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville, Doug Neumann, Jesse Thoeming

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Lindell welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Consent Agenda

Terfler moved approval of the consent agenda with High seconding. The consent agenda was unanimously approved.

Rebranding Update

The committee which consists of Rings, Sorg and Ellingson received 6 proposals from the RFP to rebrand Downtown. Mindfire and de Novo are the final two firms and they will be coming to the Economic Alliance for a final interview with the committee on Friday, May 31st. A final decision will be made the following week in which the committee will bring the recommendation to the full SSMID commission for a vote. The commission requested to see a copy of the RFP, Komisar will get that sent out with the minutes.

WOW Project Update

The WOW Project committee has landed at 2 options:

1. Set up poles with projectors at the top of them to project an image onto the 3rd Street/3rd Ave corner of the Armstrong Building. Once this technology is up and running, it can be a color light show, live TV, a still image, etc. This would be a 15 lumen projector costing \$40k each. Committee is considering installation of two permanent poles on both 3rd Ave and 3rd Street so that both art and info could “wrap” around the Armstrong Building.
2. Blanket of string lights over 3rd Ave. This potential “light ceiling” would consist of approximately 3,500 programmable LED bulbs that would cover a ½ block of 3rd Street, starting at 2nd Ave. Approximate cost would be \$140k, but it has several challenges & risks that need to be overcome. The local service provider who has been working with the committee will have additional information on this potential project at the next meeting.

The commission agreed that the projection poles would be the best option out of the two and will allow for the sample to arrive to identify the quality and specifics.

Downtown Bench Presentation

Currently there are 140 benches the Downtown District maintains. Approximately 10% of these benches get used throughout the day which somewhat higher percentages during events such as the Farmers' Market. Thoeming stated he doesn't feel the need to replace all 140 benches.

Komisar presented 5 bench options to the commission. The top 2 benches were the recycled plastic bench which would be eco-friendly and well under budget and the bench that Confluence and the City will be using for the 3rd Ave Bridge update which is slightly over budget but will provide a consistent look and feel. The commission decided to move forward with the Confluence/City bench and to order 70 of 6' option. High motioned this decision with Timko seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. Komisar will contact the distributor for an official quote.

Paramount Tower Grocer Discussion

As a review, the SSMID has been asked for \$500k for a federal grant match. This amount doesn't have to be given in lump sum and could be spread out over the next couple of years. The commission created a sub-committee to review the details of the potential grocer and the financial impact it could have on the SSMID. This committee consists of Drown, High, Timko, Jaffray and Terfler. Thoeming will work with the developer to facilitate that discussion with leadership of Brother's Grocer.

Downtown Parking

Neumann showed the SSMID Commission a spreadsheet detailing parking revenues and parking debt payments since 2013. The SSMID contributed \$96k per year in 2014, 2015 and 2016, which helped the parking system make its required payments to the City of CR. Since then, parking revenues have been sufficient to make the payments, but Neumann is forecasting that as debt payments increase over the next few years that the parking system might need SSMID's help again, as soon as 2020. The City issued debt to fund construction of the new Event Center Ramp (and found flood recovery money to fund the Southside Ramp, which doesn't have any debt on it) and relies on parking revenues to make about \$1.1 million of principal and interest payments each year. If parking revenues are not sufficient, the City has to make the payments instead out of Downtown TIF or other sources, which may detract from other downtown priorities. While the SSMID is not obligated to help with payments, Neumann reminded the SSMID that it has played a huge historic role in parking issues. Before the Downtown Parking Management board was created, the SSMID used to talk about parking more than any other issue. So it might be something the SSMID would consider continuing to support. No action or decision is being asked at this point, but it may be something to discuss during budget discussions in late summer / early fall.

Greene Square Mural

Thoeming presented a mock-up of a mural that he envisions on the side of the 3rd Ave. parking ramp facing Greene Square and the bike trail. With the new Banjo Block housing development and hotel projects, we will see an increase in foot traffic in this area and this mural would highlight the American Discovery Trail by including a map of the national trail and local trail. This mural would be approximately 75 feet in length (ramp wall is 200 feet total). If approved, Thoeming would work alongside Murals & More to release an RFP to local artists to bid on. The estimated cost is \$30-40k and could potentially come out of the \$170k special projects line item in the budget. Mattes motioned to approve allocating up to \$35k from the special projects line item to this mural with High seconding. This motion was unanimously approved.

Passport Program

The Commission passed the program during the March meeting and the plan is to launch next month and run through September 23rd. Consumers will get their "passport" stamped from the 12 participating businesses and will be entered to win one of three prize packages:

- Staycation – dinner at Popoli, overnight stay at the DoubleTree
- Country Music Package – Tree Town music festival tickets/package to Hazzard County
- Ladies Day/Night Out – Allure spa and Della Viti wine tasting

The program has partnered with The Gazette and passports will be given out at the participating businesses and the Economic Alliance.

Final Downtown Sucks Video

The final video of the Downtown Cedar Rapids Sucks Video Series has been launched and it focuses on the large employers of Downtown. Bardsley presented social media outcomes from the series as a whole:

- Video Views: 400k
- Video Shares: 290
- Page views on dtcrsucks.com: 3,715
- Growth in Likes for Downtown CR Facebook: 22%
- Increase in traffic from search: 696%

Overall, Bardsley was pleased with these outcomes and the performance on the video views, shares and likes was above average. The total spend on the campaign was \$20k.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.